

# ECHOES FROM THE PAST

BY

MARY NORCOTT BRYAN

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Marion Cobb Bryan  
(Marion Bryson Carter)  
from her

grandmother,

Mary Norcott Bryan,

New Bern,

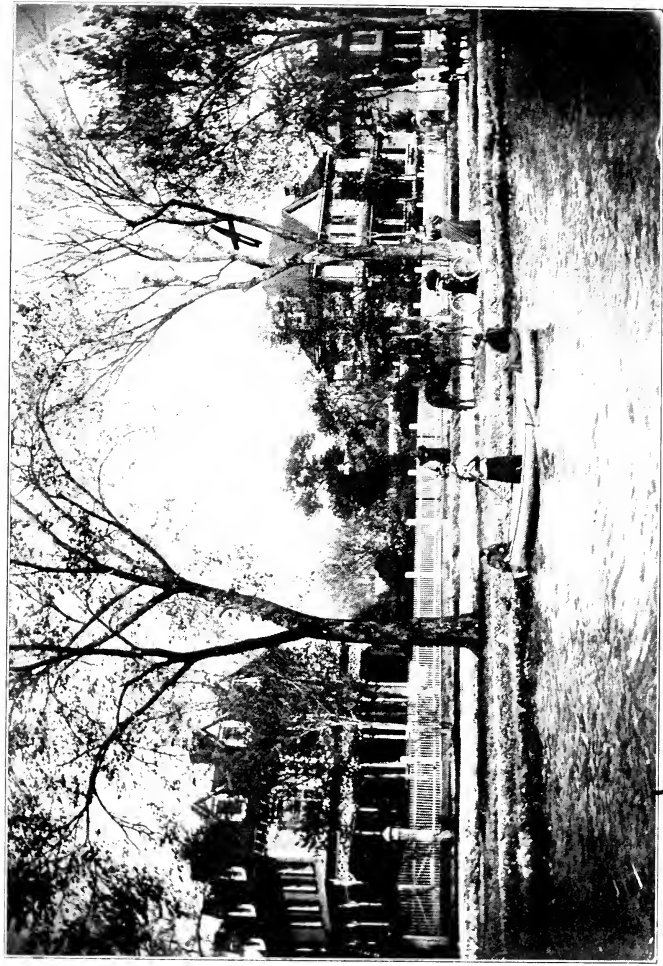
North Carolina.

"  
Look unto the  
Rock whence ye  
are hewn" -  
Isaiah 51-1

"  
Remove not the ancient  
land mark which thy  
fathers have set" -  
Prov. 22 - v. 28







On Neuse River home of the Bryan  
New Bern, N.C. children

# Echoes from the Past

By

Mary Norcott Bryan

Also author of  
A Grandmother's  
Recollection of Dixie -

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## ECHOES FROM THE PAST

Dedicated to the Memory of my Mother.

“But might I choose of all the loved and lost ones,  
Whose going Home has cost me bitter tears,  
It would be thy face, oh! gentle, loving Mother,  
So missed, so longed for, through these empty years”.

Feeling that whatever is good in my life, or the lives of my children, is due to my Mother's love and prayers, I think it not unwise to write you a short account of her life.

She prayed three times a day. Always at twilight was her voice lifted up to God for blessings on her loved ones.

I am especially anxious for my children to remember their grandmother, the essence of whose saintly life still lingers over us, and helps us along in this journey to the future—

MARY NORCOTT BRYAN

New Berne, North Carolina  
May 1st, 1921



## LETTER I

*To my dear children:*

General John Simpson came from Boston when a young man and settled in Pitt County. He married Elizabeth Hardee, a neighbor. His grand-father was the celebrated Roger Clapp, who came to Boston from England in 1633. Roger was a great man. He was a Governor of Castle William in Boston, and a zealous patriot. His children's names were a little peculiar "Wait," "Wait-Still," "Desire," "Experience," "Hope," "Unite," "Supply," "Elizabeth," "Preserved".

General John Simpson, was considered the most prominent man in Eastern Carolina during Colonial times. His life and history are on record. He lived on a plantation six miles from Greenville, which he named "Chatham." He was a Churchman. After the Revolutionary War the Episcopal Church became very unpopular, because it was the Church of England.

Gen'l Samuel Simpson son of Gen'l John Simpson was married four times yet he had only twenty years of married life. His first wife was named Penelope McIlvane and she was the mother of Mary Nixon Simpson. She was baptised by Bishop Ravenscoft, for whom your Father is named.

Rev. William Phillips Biddle, was a Baptist Minister from Princess Anne County, Virginia. While traveling through the country when quite a young man, he met my grandmother, Mary Nixon Simpson, and they were married in 1810, when she was only sixteen years old. She was the only living child of General Samuel Simpson, and when she married he made it a condition that she live near him.

Rev. William P. Biddle when a young man made a will. I copy a portion of it as follows:

"I will that Isabel, Owen and Lillie be made and set free. Isabel belonged to my Grandfather, and lived with him a faithful servant 'till his death. Owen has been a diligent and faithful servant to me, and greatly assisted me in my business. Lillie nursed me and belonged to my parents. I desire her to be free. Also at the end of five years I desire Eliza to be free. There are few such servants for faithfulness and merit. I wish all my other servants to be hired out for ten years, at which time I will that all shall be free.

"I wish that they may be tendered to the Colonization Society of Virginia. They shall be settled in the most eligible portion of Africa, or in the South West of our own continent. I will that all that are twenty-one years of age shall receive six months education".

This will was written in 1820, and was rather remarkable, as he had a plantation with many negroes at that time, and the question of slavery was just being agitated.

My mother was born in New Berne in a comfortable brick residence on Craven Street in August 1812. This was the year of our second war with England. The family had moved temporarily from Hermitage Plantation.

So far as I know my dear mother's childhood was uneventful; passed in a pleasant country home with many happy gambols under the shade trees, with her sisters and brothers. She was away from home at school only one year, but her parents always employed a governess. Her thirst for knowledge was great, and especially was she versed in the Bible.

Gen'l. Samuel Simpson was very much attached to my mother, whom he called "Sally", and she spent many weeks at his Fort Barnwell home. At that time her father, Rev. William P. Biddle, had unwisely involved himself in debt by buying much land, and was unable to finish the education of his two oldest children, Sam and Sally.

Her grandfather, Gen'l. Simpson, offered to educate one, and my mother, with her usual unselfishness, gave way to her brother, who went to Chapel Hill, and graduated there in 1832.

One of her great pleasures was going to "Associations" with her father, sometimes on her fleet Arabian mare, given her by the old General, or seated beside him in an old fashioned gig. I well remember this old gig going to ruin behind the carriage house at "Hermitage", and how we children enjoyed playing in it.

Elder Biddle had strict ideas of rearing children—so different from his gentle, kindly wife. He considered it well to discipline them, and on several occasions my dear mother would be all ready to go to one of these "Big Meetings", her capes, which capable hands had been weeks in embroidering, done up, with ruffles and collars, and put into the portmanteau, when her father would say he had reconsidered—she must remain at home.

She was fond of dress, and always had lovely taste. Once she wanted a bonnet which cost \$16.00. Gen'l Simpson, from whom she must have imbibed some of these ideas told her he would give her the money if she would make him a set of shirts—and a set of shirts in those days were very different from the ones made in these days. Every thread had to be pulled, and every stitch was taken by her hands. He was a handsome old man, with bright black eyes, and until the day of his death wore a cue and knee breeches, silver buckles and silk stockings. He had his sloops that sailed regularly to Boston, and I have a number of memoranda in which fine clothes and fine underwear, etc. were ordered, along with groceries.

## LETTER II

My mother was twenty-one years old when she married my father, John Norcott, in 1834. He was a widower with one son, Joe. He took his bride to Greenville, Pitt County, and there in our comfortable home, seven years after their marriage, I was born. There was great rejoicing at my birth, but much disappointment at the sex. I had been long desired, and my father thought a son of my mother's would be something very extra.

When I was three weeks old I was taken very ill, and the new found treasure was nursed almost to the loss of my mother's life. She was always delicate. I never remember her except as an invalid.

The question of providing nourishment was a serious one, and every day the carriage was brought out and John sent into the country seven miles to a friend's farm, who loaned a wet nurse. Finally Amy, one of our own servants, was brought up from "Woodlawn", our plantation half way between Greenville and Washington, bringing her baby "Hannah" with her. Amy was never allowed to do any farm work after this, and Hannah was reared in the house and made a pet of. I lived very happily in Greenville the earlier years of my life. Until I was twelve years old I had a grown nurse, "Maria", "Mamy Ria" I always called her. She had a daughter "Rose", whom she would take behind the chicken-coop, and beat when she got mad, and I was in perfect agony until it was over. Maria and Hollon were sisters, and were most faithful, capable servants. We took first one and then the other on our trips.

I was very delicate the first seven years of my life,

Princeton - 1839-1841-

and during stormy days, and sometimes days of sunshine, I was confined to the house. Many a book of pictures have I literally worn out. Especially do I remember Dickens "Five Sisters of York".

"Ma was a handsome woman, five feet seven inches in height, very dignified and courteous in her bearing. She had blue eyes, a straight nose, and an abundance of auburn hair. Her family had this color of hair, and when they were children were called "The Woodpecker's Nest". She dressed with beautiful taste, and entertained with lavish hand, had an abundance of this world's goods, and gave generously.

Our home in Greenville was situated on a large square of ground, and to my childish eyes it was a paradise. It was an old fashioned comfortable house, with a double piazza in front, and a large parlor on one side, over-looking a flower garden, with a big tree in the middle, and flowers of all kinds around. The vegetable garden occupied almost a square, and was laid out in beds bordered with currant and berry bushes and fruit trees.

Up in the garret was a barrel holding a most wonderful "Wedding Tree", made of swiss and tinsel. I have never seen anything I thought so fine. This was on the table at different weddings, and occasionally I was allowed to see it.

My first sorrow was the death of a red bird Joe Norcott had given me. Joe was much older than I was; he made a great pet of me, and was always giving me presents. He gave me a large black doll. Our good cook, Rachel, would get drunk occasionally. Once when she was in that condition the nurse placed the doll in the walk between the kitchen and the house, and you never heard such screaming and yelling when the old woman saw it. She thought the devil had her for sure.

Joe Norcott was an exceedingly handsome man. He was five feet eight inches, the height of our Father. He had large brown eyes, brown hair, and very trim figure. After he graduated from Princeton he studied law under Mr. Mordecai, in Raleigh, and it was said he and two other young men kept one tailor employed all the time. He kept horses and a body servant, and life was so easy for him that he learned to drink. He died at the early age of twenty-eight years.

We left the low country in the summer, and spent the months from July to October among the hills, generally

going to "Jones" and "Shocco" Springs in Warren County. My father's health began to fail soon after I was born, and the physician advised his going to the "White Sulphur Springs" in Virginia. He began to decline rapidly, and died on July 6th, 1845. Joe Norcott and I walked hand in hand up the hillside to a beautifully shaded cemetery, and there he was buried under a big oak tree. The tomb stone was hauled from Richmond, and is in a good state of preservation to this day.

I am very proud of my father's record. He was what is called a "Self-made Man", and I shall be pleased indeed if his descendants make as good a record. The Norcotts came from Virginia at the same time the Grimes' did, and settled in Pitt County. They were respectable people but I have not been able to trace ancestry except through the Clarks on the mother's side, and the Norcotts through a large fortune supposed to have been left them in Fredonia, N. Y.

When my father was two years old, and his sister Ann six months, his father was killed by a man named Moore. He, hoping to better himself, had bought a plantation near Fayetteville, and was on his way to pay for it. The young man Moore asked to accompany him. The first day Moore would ride up suddenly from behind, and Mr. William Norcott would look to see what was the matter. This became so frequent that he ceased to gaze backward, so Moore rode up suddenly and with a club knocked him from his horse, and killed him. The next day some hunters found the dead body beside a ditch bank, and the horse quietly feeding by the side of his master. The man was captured, and the money found under a log in a swamp, and Moore suffered for his crime.

This of course left the widow and her two little helpless children in a bad way, which was made worse when she made a very poor match with a man named Nobles by whom she had two sons. The step-father was very severe to little John, so when he was ten years old he ran away to Greenville, and lived with an old cousin named Mrs. Polly Dancy. He worked and made friends. He was a bright little fellow, and so capable that at the age of eighteen he was sent in charge of a vessel to the West Indies. He had to run the blockade, and brave many dangers, but he was successful in bringing out a cargo of rum and molasses, which netted his employer many thousands of dollars.

*Abram Clark, signer of*

After that he opened a store for general merchandise in Greenville and once made a large sum in salt. He bought the Woodlawn plantation of 4,000 acres, and bought negroes of good character to work it. He was an ardent Whig, and had great influence in the elections. Twice a year my mother made out her list of all kinds of delicious West India preserves, guava jellies, etc., for her pantry, and sent to New York for them in the order for the store.

My mother was very dignified in every way, but I inherited my father's gay disposition. I have thought in her management of me she did not make due allowance for that, but she was always doing good. She never turned a beggar from her door—she was a most faithful mistress, reading her Bible and praying with her servants. She had ample means, which were used to the Glory of God, and in charity. She was always doing for her brothers and sisters. Mr. Lovejoy, who taught your father and his brothers in Raleigh, first taught in Greenville. He was induced to come to Greenville through the instrumentality of my father, on Joe Norcott's account. Having such a good school "Mother" took advantage of it, and her sisters, Elizabeth, Susan, and Anne, and Frank and Henry, her brothers, had successively, a warm welcome and a happy time with her during their school days.

### LETTER III

We did not remain many years in our home in Greenville, but moved to Woodlawn, and from there to dear old Washington, where my happiest days were passed.

I wish I could impress upon you the delights of plantation life during slavery. We had a great many negroes, and they were all treated kindly. It was the exception to hear of unkind masters. It would have been very foolish to mistreat property that could be converted into money. We never dreamed of being afraid, and during the Civil War when the masters were at the Front we have yet to hear of the first instance where the slaves behaved badly.

When I was a child I had a pony, of course, but being wild a gentle black mule was substituted in his place, and so much pleasure was she to me that I have always felt kindly disposed to the mule creation. I would get

upon her back, and with several small negroes following to wait on me I would fly up and down the plantation roads, sometimes going by the mill and through the stream, which I thought great fun.

“Woodlawn” Plantation was so large that there were many roads through it, and the negro cabins were scattered in different convenient places. Old Cat, the colored over-seer, occupied a two story house with garden attached. His wife did not work in the field, but remained at home, raising poultry, vegetables, etc. for herself. Old Cat came up every Saturday night to report progress. He openly said he would harbor runaway slaves, and we did not say anything to the contrary. Then there was a long alley in which there were a dozen cabins, shady trees, and a well of delicious cool water. Old Aunt Rachel occupied the middle cabin, and the babies were brought to her in the morning to take care of while the mothers worked in the fields. I used to go down and nurse them by the hour, taking first one and then another from the cradle. All the cabins had gardens attached, and there was a large place where rutabaga and collards were planted. These the servants were at liberty to help themselves to. Sunday they always had a fine dinner, often company from the neighboring farms, and a nice fat chicken graced every table. The looms were kept busy all the time. I wish I could show you the heavy woolen cloth woven. The home-spun was bought by the bolt. I watched the flats loaded with corn and cotton from the big barn. I was “Little Missis” to all of them, and it is a wonder I did not get spoilt with so much attention, but I was so full of life I could not take time for adulation. What a time I had rolling down great hills of cotton seed! And getting the driver to let me drive the mules around the gin! And how we did enjoy “hog killing” and sausage making! Great pots of lard in the yard cooking, great blocks of wood with meat on them, and women chopping up sausage meat! We had no cutters in those days! Then sheep shearing, and watching the looms weave thick woolen cloth for the hands! But of all times on a plantation Christmas is the best.

Not being strong enough to manage so large a plantation my mother hired out the able bodied men, about thirty or more, to work in the turpentine forests of Georgia, receiving from two hundred and fifty to three hundred dollars apiece for them for a year. They

returned at Christmas, dressed in very fine clothes, always with a watch and chain, and money in their pockets, made from doing extra work. Their sweet-hearts and wives were ready to receive them, and they often frolicked all night long.

My pleasure was greatly lessened by having no companions. I dug up the parsley bed looking for a little brother, and kept old Jack, the carpenter, in a constant state of misery by dulling his hatchet in digging at old hollow stumps looking for the same baby, but I never found one. As soon as I heard of the advent of a little darky down I went and begged to be allowed to name it, which request was often granted, and that is the way I learned to sew, by making clothes for them.

Sometimes we would row down Trantus Creek in our large boat, which Tony, our milk and butter man, had charge of. This was a lovely row from "Woodlawn" to the Grist Farm, and we would spend the night there, and have a gay time with the Grist children with games and dances.

I was so happy in Washington. My teacher was Mrs. Worthington. I was very quick about everything but arithmetic. She seemed to think I was a wild child, as indeed I was. I loved to play with the boys, and such nice boys they were. Johnnie and Jimmy Hoyt, Allen and Wily Grist, Adam Tredwell, Jimmie and Willie Howard—Jimmy Howard was killed in the war, and the others have paid the debt I shall soon have to pay. Sallie Howard was three weeks older than I, and Oh! what an unfortunate three weeks! I had to give way on all occasions. My dear friend married as I did and had a large family. She left us a few years ago, but I had the comfort of seeing her several times during her last illness.

Often on bright beautiful Saturdays Tony would come with his boat, then ma, a crowd of girls, and I would go and spend the day at Woodlawn. A carriage would meet us at the landing, and such a busy, happy time we would have fixing the lunch and so on. The dairy, which stood under a huge oak tree, near the "Great House" door was full of milk, butter and cream, and this was freely given us. Oh! the charming plantation days, never to return! Oh! the tender friendship between servant and master, so little understood!



## LETTER IV

I don't believe any modern watering place can compare to the old fashioned "Jones" and "Shocco" Springs in Warren County. The refined, agreeable company one met there, and the highbred women, one does not always meet with these days.

Frank Johnson's band was a feature of the place. He was a wonderful musician, and had seven sons equally gifted. He was a slave and hired his time. I think I can hear his "Swing Corners", "Ladies to the right," "Sashae all of you".

My mother and Mrs. Howard were handsome widows and great friends. They were always together. Ma had a number of offers of marriage, and sometimes the beaux would make me the medium of tender messages. One, a Dr. Green made quite a pet of me. Oscar Alston would come to the Springs, and put a table on the lawn, and display his toys and candy. So on one occasion when he had done this I saw Dr. Green pass and asked him for some candy. He gave it, of course, but I had no sooner put the candy into my mouth when it began to taste bitter. I knew what to expect from my mother when she found out what I had done, and I was not disappointed.

This Oscar Alston was a remarkable negro, as was also Frank Johnson. Oscar married and had a large family. He sent his children to Ohio to be educated. One, a son, was an Episcopal clergyman. The girls were taught music, and when I was six years old my mother spent three months in Philadelphia under Dr. Hodge, Bettie Alston went as our maid, and we got to respect the Alstons very much.

There was a scuppernong vine covering two acres at Jones Springs. I have never tasted such delicious grapes. But once they were not so good. I had on a pretty new dress, and was on the top of the arbor when I tore my dress so badly that not even my faithful Hollon could mend it. I had on a lovely white dress on another occasion which Hollon had spent weeks in making; the insertion put in by "Ladder stitch" and "Herring bone". Mother was already in the carriage at Jones Springs, to return to Shocco Springs, six miles off (we were spending the day at Jones Springs), when I could not be found. Finally I was discovered, playing on an old brush heap over an unused well, and the beautiful dress torn all to pieces. You can well imagine I was silent during the homeward drive.

## LETTER V

When I was thirteen years old my mother married Mr. S. B. Carraway of Monticello Plantation, ten miles from Kinston. He lived four years, and most of that time I was away at boarding school but passed my winter vacations at Monticello, and my summers at Brandon, our summer home seven miles from Raleigh. My step-father was very kind to me, as was also his son Willie, sixteen years old. We both had beautiful ponies, and the long delightful rides we took, generally getting up at five o'clock in the morning, and coming home to a breakfast of fruit, berries, broiled chicken, waffles, beaten biscuit, such as no one but a Southern Cook can make.

Just after my mother's marriage to Mr. Carraway she had a severe attack of illness, and the physician said she must go to the White Sulphur Springs, the same place where my father died. I knew very little about books, having lost much time from traveling about, so it was decided not to take me. The only school open at that time, July, was in Raleigh, kept by a minister and his wife. It was our first parting, and we felt dreadfully. She wanted to leave Hollon with me, but it was thought best not to do so, so Mother in her distress asked the teacher if I got sick to let her know, and if I died in no case to have me buried until she arrived.

After reaching the Springs my mother had a relapse, and for days her life was despaired of. Just then I heard a whisper among the girls that she had told the teacher something about my dying, and had even selected the dress I was to wear in case such an event occurred. I had been very much petted, and was very unhappy, and this rumor was very painful to me. As I would take each dress out of the trunk I would wonder if that was the one I should wear in my coffin. The whole trouble was that the teacher had received the impression that we were only using her school as a convenience, and was much incensed at the idea. She wrote a letter that she wished me to be removed as I was disorderly. My mother had returned then, and it was only a few weeks before the closing of school. She handed the letter to her husband, who was a good man, and he read it to me. I began to cry and begged him to reserve the letter, and send it when I went home, as I feared for the consequence to Mother in her enfeebled condition. I think he was very glad to do this, and in a few days when I returned home a complimentary letter was written. I was then

sent to the Richmond Female Institute, and I spent three years there very happily—made friends with teachers and pupils. But the person who had most influence over me, and had more to do with moulding my character after my mother was an English lady named Kingsford, who had a select school in Washington, D. C. This school was limited to twenty boarders and the same number of day scholars. I was so happy at this school; I formed so many charming acquaintances and friends. I corresponded with some of them for many years. We were allowed to visit one Saturday in each month. I certainly enjoyed that. Then we went to President Buchanan's "Levees", and to the Capitol, and other places of interest, and took long walks in every part of the city.

I always had a sweetheart on hand. I recall one, Johnny Potts, with whom I was much in love. When I was about ten years old he sent me flowers every week, and strange to say I never see a white narcissus now but his pleasant face rises before me. He was killed in our Civil War. Then I fell much in love with a nephew of Mr. Corcoran, the Washington banker; quite as much as David Copperfield was with Dora. Even the sun shone brighter when this Sweetheart was by.

We had a teacher at this school, a Mrs. Thompson, a tall, gawky graduate of Vassar. She could do nothing with these bright Southern girls. What jokes we did play upon her! One night when Mrs. Kingsford was gone we put paper over our combs, and gave out the most wild music. The faster we played the madder she got. She had a time with the girls and their sweethearts. One night we got nicely caught. The boys (Columbia students) were serenading us, and singing "Star of the Evening, Beautiful Star" and "Annie Laurie", and so on. We were at the window making frantic efforts to wave, when the door opened, and in walked Madam Kingsford! Silence was supreme, and then we all made a rush for our beds. Fanny Fox, my bed-fellow, popped in too hurriedly, and the slats fell out of the bed on to the floor with such a crash! This friend of mine was from Mississippi, and lived next door to Jacob Thompson, then Secretary of the Interior, and residing at that time in Washington. They had an only son, Macon, a very nice boy, but much disfigured by being salivated when a little fellow. His mouth was all twisted, and he was compelled to eat with his fingers. He never had been in love with anyone but this girl, and after she left school he married her, and

Kate Thompson, their daughter was one of the most beautiful women in the south.

I can never forget Mrs. Kingsford's pie plant and rhubarb pies, especially as each pie was cut into eight pieces, the old doctor refusing to make them larger. Nor can I ever forget her plum puddings, which were delicious. She had an English recipe, from which she would not part. She always made twelve, and we had one every Sunday.

The box I received from home that Christmas was something to be remembered. Gold and silver cake, fruit cake, a great package of candy, parched peanuts already shelled, home made sausage, which I bribed the cook to broil for me, jelly, and everything I could wish for. The box lasted during the holidays, and with every taste of the food I felt how rich I was in my mother's love.

Several times Mrs. Kingsford took some of the girls to Baltimore to spend Sunday, and we took a never-to-be-forgotten trip to Mt. Vernon on a big steamer, and met a funny old preacher, who told us many things we did not know.

Then our commencement at the Smithsonian Institute, where I made the one great triumph of my life, very unexpected, and wholly undeserved, and due only to the fact that the subject "A peep through Time's Spy glass", was a pleasant hit at the girls. Part of the program was a flower play in which I was a poppy; then the prizes, in which I received Jeremy Taylor's works. This was in 1857.

During the session my step-father died. My mother and I spent the following summer very quietly and pleasantly at "Brandon" our Wake County summer home. My pony "Charlie" was a great pleasure to me. I rode miles every day. In the fall we moved to New Berne where we have since lived, except the four years of war.

I had a delightful winter in New Berne; was invited out constantly, and had company at home. These new fashioned dances were not in vogue then, I am thankful to say. We danced the Virginia reel, the Cotillion, waltzed, and played such as Grand Multa, stage-coach, and other games, and always finished off with a delicious supper.

I had met your Father at the Raleigh Fair, and had engaged myself to him before the summer which Mamma and I and our maid Hollon spent at the Virginia Springs.

We took the South Side Railroad at Petersburg, and had such a lovely trip viewing mountains and valleys, and laughing at Hollon, who took advantage of our passing through the tunnels to "dip" her much enjoyed snuff.

First we went to the Alleghany Springs. Fortunately a cadet who lived near took a fancy to me, and what wonderful rides I had on his horse, raised in these mountains, and he riding one equally fine.

Here we met a family named Prescott from Louisiana. We all became so fond of each other that we spent the whole summer together. Where my mother and I went they did also.

We were enchanted with the Yellow Sulphur Springs—the must lovely spot in all that lovely country, and there we met a family of Prestons, native people, who had a large stock farm, and entertained delightfully. The son, Walter, was very fond of me, and we visited them in their lovely mountain home.

I got very friendly with a gentleman from Petersburg, who drove a span of spirited horses, and he allowed me to drive them. The owner's name is long since forgotten, but the essence of the drives remains.

Louis Prescott and I had a most desperate flirtation. He was engaged to a girl from Louisiana, and I to your Father. He became so persistent and I so bewildered had I been a Romanist I would have sought the cloisters.

In October we went to New York, and stopped in the famous old St. Nicholas Hotel. This was essentially a Southern Hotel, and we met many of our Springs acquaintances. We spent some weeks in New York. My mother was under the care of Dr. Bedford. How happy these days were! Free from care! How thoughtless I was! I took pleasure in everything. I ordered my bridal trousseau then, and what charms of beauty my dresses were and how unconscious I was of any charm, if I had any, or anything else but to be happy all the day long.

## LETTER VI

On November 24th, 1859 I was married in our home at New Berne to your father, Henry Ravenscroft Bryan of Raleigh, by the Rev. Thomas Skinner of Raleigh. We took a southern bridal trip, remaining two months. "Cotton was king" in those days, and we considered buying a plantation further south, and moving out there. After looking about a great deal we concluded the "Old North State"

was good enough, especially as we encountered one of the usual yearly "freshets", and saw miles of the country under water. The steamer made her way guided by the trees on each side of the river.

So we returned home and with some money my dear Father had left me we bought the "Clermont" plantation.

We spent several days in Memphis, going from there on the Steamer Ingorma a five day's journey. There were six brides and grooms along. John Hines was one of the guests. He was your father's great friend, and we all got very friendly, indeed.

I was much disappointed at the appearance of the "Father of Waters". It cannot compare to our own beautiful Neuse. It is much narrower, deeper, and the waters a cruel dark color. How many beating hearts, and happy voices have been stilled beneath its waves! There was an exceedingly attractive and beautiful girl from South Carolina, named Victoria Jordan, in New York getting her trousseau at the same time I was. She followed on the same route a week later, and the steamer took fire. Her husband refused to leave her, and hand in hand both jumped to a watery grave.

We had a pleasant stay in New Orleans at the St. Charles. We went to the French theater, and got a scowl from Louis Prescott, who occupied a seat near, saw the slave market, and the levees. The river being higher than the surrounding ground is kept in place by huge embankments, which require constant watchfulness, and much labor.

The trip from New Orleans by boat to Mobile was very interesting. We passed the place on which the island stood many years before, which was destroyed by a tidal wave. The large hotel was filled with guests; it was a gala night, there was dancing and revelry in the building. The dancers noticed the planks of the floor begin to move, the water to cover their feet, and before morning there was not a sign of hotel or guest; all had disappeared; beautiful girls, babies, mothers, all answered the last call before the morning light.

I was charmed with Mobile—wide shady streets, and the glimmering bay in the distance; the sunshine and flowers, and sweet shady homes. I saw Edith Whitfield here. Afterwards she married a Yankee General.

The trip up the Alabama and Tombigbee Rivers was also full of interest. We stopped at Selma, Montgomery,

and with your father's sister Mrs. Speight, who lived on a large plantation with her husband. We also stopped at Demopolis, and made General Nathan and Gaius Whitfield a visit. Everything was in grand style, and they treated us royally. Gen'l Whitfield was a musical genius, and had invented a huge kind of piano which sounded something like a calliope.

But after awhile our pleasant visit ended, and we returned home, had a reception, and settled down to the every day life of married people.

On October 3rd, 1860 my little boy, John Norcott, was born. I was delighted with the little fellow. He filled out my measure of love. We had "Mammy Ria" to nurse him, and I stood over the crib in admiration, as did also my mother and "Mammy Ria". We watched each smile and look of love; watched his development, and thought him a most wonderful child. My mother sent to New York and bought him a most beautiful white embroidered cloak and cap. Your father had his crib made in Baltimore. Mr. Seth Atmore gave him a silver cup, which was stolen during the war, and after many years recovered. His baby carriage was on the last boat to arrive before the blockade.

The winter of 1861 was a most anxious one. We could not tell what would be the result of so much agitation. In the meantime your father was making "Clermont" a model farm. A number of nice houses were built, the fine brick residence repaired, stock of every kind bought, and a large crop of corn and cotton planted. The product of the first year would have been 300 bales of cotton and 1,000 barrels of corn, besides peas, potatoes, etc. All this, of course, involved great expense, which could have been easily paid from the first year's produce, but the Yankees took New Berne, and we had to abandon our farm. We lost everything. The negroes were freed, the houses burnt, the brick house, which was built of bricks brought from England, pulled down, trees cut down, and the plantation left a barren wilderness. The cotton was used as a barricade at Union Point, the corn fed the Yankee soldiers, and our legacy was debts.

My mother had a long attack of illness this winter, and our chief pleasure was in watching the development of my little son.

George Bryan was stationed in New Berne at this time, and stayed with us. We learned to love and appreciate his beautiful Christian character. In July '61 ma,

Baby, "Mammy Ria" and I went to Kittrell's Springs near Raleigh for several weeks. George was at training camp three miles from there, and we saw a great deal of him. He was one of the bravest, and gentlest boys I ever knew. He had graduated at Chapel Hill at the age of eighteen, and had immediately been offered a Greek tutorship. He gave this up to become a lieutenant in the Confederate Cavalry. He would often ride from his camp to the springs, and spend an hour with us. Often when I went to my room at night, after having danced all the evening in the ball-room my mother would say: "We also have had a pleasant visit. George has been here".

We stopped a little while at Wake Forest, and came home to find affairs still more unsettled. Your father concluded it was useless to try to make another crop, so early in '62 he took a good many of the negroes to Wake County. In March things were so threatening it was thought best for as many of the women and children to leave as could conveniently do so. We packed up some bedding, trunks, etc., and went to Company Shops, now called Burlington. We left our homes handsomely furnished, a year's provisions in the pantry and smoke-house, cordials, wines, preserves, pickles, smoked hams, and an abundance of everything, bed clothes, table linen, and everything required for a home including a handsome book-case filled with all kinds of books. The furniture and many other things were sent north by the soldiers, a package of love letters opened, read and laughed at.

We had two bed-rooms on the front of the house at Burlington, looking over the piazza and railroad tracks. Our excess baggage was stored somewhere. My mother, always an invalid, was taken very ill when we got to the Shops, and the baby took the whooping cough on the cars, which was followed by measles and then slow fever, which ended his life when he was twenty-one months old, July 8th, 1862. He was buried in the cemetery at Greensboro, and we have never been able to find the sacred ashes, so much burying there during the war.

Burlington was a pleasant country village, and Fannie was born there. I had my bed placed by the window so I could look out and many a sad sight have I witnessed—one poor boy, every bone in his body crushed in a mill nearby was brought and placed under the railroad shelter. His heart-broken mother stood over him until the end came.

After we all got better we went to Lexington, and



stayed several months. The refugees in some instances were not cordially received by the up-country people, and had it not been for the yellow fever, which was so fatal in New Berne in 1863 it would have been better for us to have remained at home.

## LETTER VII

After Norcott's death, and so much sickness and trouble, we determined to get nearer home, so as we could not rent a house in Raleigh we went to your Grandfather Bryan's little farm four miles from there. The house was a log cabin with a shed, and a small piazza in front, with a half-story over the main room. My dear mother occupied this little room and it soon partook of her presence. The white pine table standing between two little four pane windows had a dimity cover, her wrapper and slippers nearby, her Bible and "Jay" on a stand near the bed, her sweet individuality was always felt. I loved to go to her room and converse with her.

I rather liked this country life. We had daily communication with town. News of terrible battles in which our friends and relatives were either wounded or killed kept us very unhappy. Your father could not fight in the war owing to a physical disability, but he was heart and soul with the "Lost Cause", and aided in every way. Indeed, when my mother with her strong business sense suggested converting the negroes into real estate he offered objections, so we "risked all, and lost all". We cut our carpets up and sent them to the soldiers, and comforts and blankets, and we were always doing something for them. My mother, and your grandmother Bryan knitted numberless pairs of socks. Their busy fingers were always at work. I made a good deal of money myself, of which I was very proud. I had a fine suit of brown homespun, woven in our loom. I had some bolts of yellow homespun, which I exchanged to great advantage. I made neck ties and fancy things and sold them, and often had several thousand dollars in Confederate money in my purse. I cut a Marshall's badge used at Chapel Hill and made money out of that. I had a last, and made Fannie many, many pairs of shoes—out of goat skin, bound with ribbon. I dressed her very fine out of my scrap trunk. She had pretty curls so attracted attention.

One night at the plantation we had a fearful experience. My mother came down from her little upstairs room,

and waked us up saying she heard strange noises in the yard. The negroes were having a gay time singing "Hurrah! Hurrah! we are free, we are free!" swinging hands and dancing around the tree, and we thought we heard the fife and drum. We got up, dressed quickly, made a fire in the huge fire-place, covered up the four-pane windows, and sat down to wait developments. Nothing happened, and morning dawned bright and rosy with no evidence of the night of mortal agony we had passed through. We found the negroes were having an unusual time with their neighbors and had enjoyed their frolic immensely. The fife we heard was the creaking of the well bucket in drawing water.

Generally once a week your grandfather and grandmother Bryan spent the day with us. My dear mother enjoyed their company very much. We had plenty of visitors in our log cabin home. We bought some coffee and sugar which we doled out, substituting parched rye and sweet potatoes ground up. We resorted to all kinds of things to make good things to eat and used so much sorghum I can't bear the taste of it to this day. Our most frequent visitor was Fred, "Freddie" as his family called him. He was your father's youngest brother, and a likable, intelligent, handsome lad. He and my mother played back-gammon by the hour—a fine game but not much in vogue now. Fred before this had been sent to Col. Tew's school in Hillsboro, but the hard barracks life was too much for his delicate constitution, and he contracted diabetes. He then went to Chapel Hill, the last of eight brothers who had graduated there with distinction. He easily took first honors, but his health failed so that his parents brought him home. This was in the height of the war and proper medicines could not be procured. He continued his studies under good old Dr. Mason, and it was then that we saw so much of him. He was very fond of coming to the farm, and spending several days at a time.

We finally found a four-room cottage in Raleigh, and moved there, where we saw much more of Fred.

War seemed to derange every part of society. Carnage and death in the army—sickness and trouble at home. Scarlet fever then broke out in the country and got among our negroes. At that particular time your father was ill in bed, and my dear mother was visiting her sister in Halifax. I was sitting by the fire, holding Fannie, a baby of eight months, in my lap, when Olly, one of the

servants, came in with a sick baby to be doctored. I put my little girl down, and took this one in my arms, and just as I did so it died. Olly screamed. I was completely unnerved, and felt I should lose Fannie also, as I had lost Norcott. The little negro child had died of scarlet fever. We immediately called up Stephen and sent him to Raleigh to find a boarding house. There were children at the Bryan home, so we could not take a scarlet fever suspect there. Stephen returned at night fall, unsuccessful.

The next morning the horses were put to the carriage, and brought to the door. I hastily packed some things in my portmanteau, and with nurse and baby started out, I knew not where. I passed through Raleigh, and took the road to Wake Forrest. My kind aunt Sue Cobb was "refugeeing" four miles from the college. I was going to continue my journey until someone took me in. When I drew up to her door I sent for her to come to the carriage, and explained the situation. She also had children, but before I finished her kind arms were outstretched, and her sweet voice bade me welcome. I shut the baby and nurse up for several days, and as no scarlet fever developed we became quite gay, and had a charming visit. We had several notes for small sums which Dr. Cobb owed us. These I gladly sent with my letter of thanks.

We found the four-room cottage which we took in Raleigh, better than the log cabin. We had to build a log pantry, and the kitchen was on the next lot. The Legislature was in session that winter, and you would be surprised at the number we stowed away on a cot in the parlor.

There had been a terrible battle at Gettysburg, and our bravest and best fell like sheep. Collin Hughes, Jacob Brooksfield, Harry Burgwyn, Jimmy Howard, and many others of our friends were killed or desperately wounded. James and Sam Biddle were doing valiant service in Virginia. George Bryan was taken prisoner. He had received a severe wound in the head, and was left for dead on the field; he crawled under a stone wall, and was there captured by a Yankee soldier, and taken to Washington, D. C., and put in prison. He suffered a great deal with his head, and portions of the bone were taken out. Some kind ladies sent him flowers. He was next taken to Johnson's Island. He passed through Baltimore, but was not allowed to speak to his brother, William Shepard Bryan, who lived there. The prison

was on an inhospitable island in Lake Erie. It was made of boards running up and down, and the bleak wind whistled through them. George would have succumbed to the cold had it not been for a very heavy overcoat his brother Frank sent him, which he wore day and night. There was a small stove in the middle of the room, with bunks built all around the sides. Some of the prisoners sat near the stove, others sat on a bench a little further removed, and still others would walk around until the first were warmed. If there was an unusually warm spell the men made pillows of sticks of wood, which were burnt when it grew colder. The fare was miserable. Joe Hellen told me he saw two soldiers fight over a beef bone until one killed the other.

All these troubles had produced softening of the brain in your grandfather. Charlotte Grimes lost her little baby, and was constantly anxious about her husband, General Bryan Grimes. He was in the front everywhere; was said to be the hero of a hundred battles. Mr. Speight had his only son killed in a skirmish, and he himself died at Bladen Springs, Alabama in 1863. Your cousin, Gen'l Johnston Pettigrew, had been killed at Falling Waters and every day we received an account of the wounding or death of some dear acquaintance or friend.

Freddie faded day by day. He was the "Benjamin" of his family, and everybody was tender and kind to him, but the disease could not be controlled, and he passed into the "Great Beyond" when he was seventeen years old.

Fabius Haywood was a prisoner at Johnson's Island at the time George was. His mother wrote him Fred was dead, and it was several days before George was allowed to speak to Haywood to ascertain which one of his brothers it was.

Five months after this my dear son was born, and I gladly named him Fred for his gifted young uncle.

## LETTER VIII

Efforts were being made to get George exchanged. I begged he might remain where he was, although uncomfortable. He was safe, but he was finally exchanged, and we were very proud of this soldier boy, so tall and handsome in the beautiful Confederate uniform, trimmed with gold braid and bright brass buttons, and a black plume in his hat. Well might his family rejoice at such a son. We tenderly lifted the brown hair, and gazed at

the wound a little to the right side of his head. It was as long as a finger, and as wide, and the bone had been shot away. Coming into a hot climate the sun affected the place. In vain we appealed to Dr. Johnson to give him a home appointment during the summer, but he would not. He was as merciless to his own son-in-law. George was sent to Richmond to fight in the battles which were raging around there. He met with action, was taken sick, and sent into a hospital, from which he issued on that fatal 16th day of August 1864. He mounted his black horse and rode to death, being shot by a minne ball just over the heart. He fell from his horse exclaiming "I am killed, boys, but we have taken the works". The telegram arrived about dinner time, and such a grief stricken family. Your father went on for the remains. Mr. Patterson, a clergyman accompanied him to the battle-field. There in a corner of the fence, with his oil coat and only six inches of dirt to cover him, with only the birds to sing a requiem, and the leaves to wave in pity, lay one of the bravest hearts that offered up a life for a lost but true cause. He was brought home and tenderly laid by the side of his young brother.

About this time we found another house in Raleigh, more convenient, opposite the Episcopal Church, and we lived there until after the surrender.

Times became more gloomy, and when the poor little Junior Reserves, boys of sixteen, were drafted, I lost heart. It certainly was pitiful to see the dear boys, so hopeful and glad, drilling, and marching so proudly to the tune of "Dixie", some of them never to return to their mothers and homes.

Raleigh was filled with soldiers and the churches and every available space were turned into hospitals. Being nearest I visited the wounded at the Episcopal Church. Many poor men were on the narrow benches, some in high delirium, some with broken bones, some even in the agony of death. A young soldier of New Orleans died just then. None knew his name. As the coffin was about to be closed over the face of "Somebody's darling," an old lady slipped forward and said "Let me kiss him for his mother". There was a profound silence and in every eye a tear.

Volumes could be written of pathetic and heart rending incidents during our four years civil war. Death hung like a heavy pall over us, food and clothes scarce, and the merciless foe still killing our men.

Although we were becoming less hopeful, yet the fall of the Confederacy was unexpected at last. I can never forget the day we heard the sad news. It was after breakfast—a bright day. A number of ladies and children had collected in the public square around the capitol in Raleigh. We had heard so many disquieting rumors that to remain at home was impossible. Suddenly there was a great commotion. Some one said: "Lee has surrendered". Such consternation on the faces of the people! Then as the news became more general such weeping and wringing of hands! Such heavy hearts! Privation, sorrow, death, and now defeat and poverty!

Soon our own troops began to pass through; weary, dirty, hungry fellows. Everyone that could, fed them. They were not allowed to stop, but as they passed our gate we handed them bread and ham. They were marching to the tune of "Dixie", the war song that we vainly thought was to lead them to victory. As our soldiers retreated the Yankees pursued. One reckless Confederate captain from Georgia was in the rear guard. He turned and fired on a soldier, then put spurs to his horse, and would have escaped but the horse stumbled and fell, and he was captured. The next morning under a guard of soldiers I saw him carried by our house to a field back of your grandfather's home, and hung to the limb of a tree under which your uncles and aunts had played in childhood.

My mother was very ill at this time. I had to pass to her room from mine through a passage-way that had a glass door at the end. It was about three o'clock in the night when she called me. I glanced toward the door, and peeping through was the face of a red-haired Yankee soldier. I was frightened so I could hardly stand, and I cannot recollect to this day, which door I finally opened.

We have cause to be proud of the war record of my cousins, James and Sam Biddle. Sam entered the army at the age of seventeen as a private, and finally ended as Captain. He was in the battle of New Berne, and was promoted for gallantry on the field. Jimmy belonged to the First Regiment of North Carolina, and fought through the whole four years of the war. He was in General Lee's army under Stuart, and Wade Hampton. He was in the battles around Richmond. His command fired the last gun in the war. He was promoted from private to lieutenant. He was in several raids around Martinsburg

and Winchester, and on one occasion his commander captured 2,900 cattle.

We had begun to get quite comfortably fixed in our home when Raleigh was captured. We had to ask for a guard or our house would have been sacked; as it was everything was taken that could be. Our fine cow was killed, and only a beef-steak cut from her, also our nice horse, leaving a colt, which we fed from a bottle. Everything from our small farm near Raleigh was gone, and the negroes free, of course. With two little children I had my hands full. I had to accept a lot of rails which were stolen from someone's fence. I had a good garden, and sold ten dollars worth of vegetables which I gave to your father to return to New Berne to see if anything was left. The first thing he did was to get Mr. John C. Washington of Kinston, an old and influential citizen out of jail.

We returned home in the Fall and boarded on George Street, near the old Palace stables, now a comfortable residence. I had no housekeeping to do, the winter was mild, and I spent most of it taking walks with the children.

We returned to Raleigh for the summer, and then settled permanently the following fall in New Berne paying eighty dollars a month for our house.

## LETTER IX

In January my pretty name-sake, Minnie, was born, and that winter Judge Bryan and family of Baltimore spent six weeks with us. As things were prosperous with us then we kept carriage and horses. The horses were named Hampton and Ashby after the Confederate Generals. Stephen, our old driver had charge, and Nellie, who also had belonged to us, was nurse. We moved again to another house, and it was here that Sam Biddle died. After going through the war with such credit he succumbed to malarial fever after only a few days illness. His father, Colonel Samuel Simpson Biddle, was the gentlest and kindest of men. I have the most pleasant recollections of him during my childhood. Just after we returned to New Berne at the close of the war I was told of a dream a northern soldier had about the brick house on the Clermont plantation. In colonial times the place belonged to Madam Moore; the house was a very grand mansion for those days. Madam Moore was said to have married three times, once for love, once for money, and once for ambition. She was a great "Lady"; had a row boat, manned by six oarsmen

dressed in livery to row her to New Berne. She went to the Episcopal Church, and had what is called a "Stall". Washington and Monroe occupied seats in this stall when they came to New Berne. This plantation afterwards belonged to the Speights. Two governors of North Carolina are buried there. But for the dream—this soldier, who had just arrived from New York had never seen this place. He, in his dream, saw the house clearly before his eyes, and was told to go into the cellar and look behind a loose brick in the fire-place and he would see a key; to take the key—at this point his dream was interrupted, but he was so impressed by what he had felt that he obtained permission to visit the place, and found everything exactly as he had dreamed. The story is this, that the key unlocked a strong box beneath the cellar bricks, in which valuables were kept. There were no banks when this house was built, and rich people had to make a place for money, jewels, etc.

There is an incident which I desire you to remember in these pages. The capture of New Berne was sudden at the end. Fighting was on the Beaufort road, and our soldiers were in that direction. Word was received to prepare extra food as our soldiers would be tired and hungry. So there were very few homes in which extra dinners were not being cooked. Just at dinner time, however, the tide turned, and the town was flooded with Yankee soldiers ready to eat all the good things prepared for our men. Many of the people were so frightened they ran out of their homes, and left the doors wide open, and I hear the enemy had a royal feast. Everything was at the mercy of the foe. Our home, of course, shared the same fate, and in their madness books and furniture were scattered around. Our large family bible was picked up by a sailor who took it to New Jersey, and it was put on a shelf at his house where it remained many years. His sister was librarian in a nearby town, and persuaded him to find the owners. A number of letters were written and finally one fell into my hands. I wrote and received the book, and have given it to my grandson, Jack London. This was fifty years after the war.

Reconstruction times were horrible in every way. Your father had begun to practice law, but it was hard work to make both ends meet. I had been reared so luxuriously I did not know where to begin. The greatest heartache of this trying time was caused by the fact that my feeble mother needed many things I could not afford



to give. Without my knowledge she sold a beautiful woven white bedspread with hand-made fringe, to an old auctioneer for \$5.00. It would easily bring a hundred in the northern markets. One day I went to see an old colored woman, Lucinda Stanley. She had been old Eubank's cook and had fallen heir to this spread. She was a very respectful, humble servant, and I have always liked her. She gave this spread to my great grand-daughter, Frances Claypoole, being the fourth in name from my mother, and when Lucinda had the little girl hold out her arms and receive the gift I was touched beyond measure. Tears came unbidden to my eyes when I thought of what we had gone through, and what self denial we had practised, and after fifty years I had learned of this piece of sacrifice on the part of my mother.

The after effects of the war were as trying as the war itself. We moved several times, and at last bought a home and were very glad to move there. My little family consisted of Fannie, Fred, Minnie and Henry, and in 1871 my blue-eyed son Shepard entered the family. When Henry was three months old we moved to this house, and have lived here ever since. The cedar trees in the yard, and the beautiful river in front, and the happy voices of children were a part of our life. Kate, Margaret and Isabel completed our dear family circle.

I had a fall before Norcott's birth, and sometimes it was quite painful. I had no comfortable rocking chair, which troubled my mother not a little. On the morning of one of my birthdays I found a nice sewing chair, which in her pleasant way, she presented to me. Tears sprang to my eyes, and I exclaimed "Oh! Why did you disfurnish yourself". She had a gold chain several times more valuable than the chair, which she had taken to the cabinet maker, and he very willingly made the exchange.

After I had been married ten years I lost my mother—the most intelligent, affectionate, patient counsellor that ever an impulsive warm hearted daughter had. I felt our home was especially blessed having had such a holy woman to dwell under its roof. I have always felt, and a sacred feeling it is, that the incense of her prayers, and the holy life my blessed martyr mother led has caused God to smile benignly upon us. We laid her tenderly away in our cemetery where the ashes of several genera-

tions repose, under the cedar trees, and amid the perfume of violets.

“No sweeter voice from human lips e’er issued  
Than that which sang low cradle hymns to me.  
I hear it now in dreams, sweet Mother,  
And shaken with sobs, awake to weep for thee.”

## LETTER X

The after effects of the war were as trying as the war itself. We submitted to the inevitable, the freeing of our slaves, the ruthless destruction of our valuable farms, the pillage of our homes, the entire loss of my mother’s large estate, and after all this if we could have been let alone; but the very elements seemed to conspire to ruin us. The crops were more often bad than good, legislation was against us, and I have often felt as if there was a great black wall in front of me behind which there was no light, but always when we came nearer the way would open.

Your father had an excellent law practice, and his family never suffered for anything, nay, I do not know anyone who has done a better part by his children. A more conscientious, faithful man never lived.

As I look back on a long married life, I recall many incidents, both laughable, and pathetic. Many things I would have my children remember, which cannot be put down in these pages.

In 1877 the most beautiful child I ever saw was given me, a brown eyed boy whom we named Edwin Speight. He died suddenly of cholera infantum when he was six months old. The shock and grief of his death so affected me that I had the first serious illness I had ever had during my married life. As I look back at all the intense pain I suffered during a long illness I realize how much it was lessened by the love and attention of my dear family. My ever faithful little nurse, Minnie, would wait by the bed-room door in the morning to come in and minister to me.

Fannie was at school at Staunton, and Fred at Bing-ham’s. I had been sick so long I became accustomed to my room, and looking at the river, and did not mind the confinement. In July I went to Beaufort for the benefit of the salt air. I sat on the piazza drinking in the life-giving breeze and growing stronger. Kate was a little thing of six, and had been having dumb chills, of

which we could not break her, so she and Henry, Jr. were sent down to me. In walking on the wharf one day Kate fell overboard, and Henry very gallantly jumped after her. He had on a pretty blue sailor suit, which was not improved by contact with the salt water, but the shock cured the chills. I think the sense of obligation which Henry has caused Kate to feel is burdensome even to this day.

Life jogged along for us as it does for many families. Most of the children by this time had left the home-nest. Your father was twice elected Judge of the Superior Court. This left me a good deal at home with one or two of my dear daughters. I still led a busy life, for he was in politics, and that is a very uncertain life.

At first I went with him on his Circuit, and did enjoy the mountain districts. In going around to the different courts we stopped at Black Mountain, sixteen miles from Asheville, and were charmed with the quietude and the beauty of the place, so much so in fact that I bought six acres on the brow of a hill, and my sons and your father helped me build a dear lodge. Since then we have spent many summers there. I gave the place to my five daughters, and we furnished it as best we could. We dug a well of delightful water through the solid rock; entertained company galore, sat on the broad piazza and viewed the mountains—"Seven Sisters", "Craggy Dome", and the numberless automobiles filled with people on their way to the Blue Ridge. I gave to my eldest daughter, her portion of "Chestnut Lodge", and you can read in the following verses how she appreciated it".—

"Do you know you have given a beautiful thing—  
Which was made by the hand of God.  
A fair lovely cliff with a wonderful view,  
Of valley and mountain and sod?

You have made me this gift in the spirit of love,  
And bade me to build there a "Home",  
The son and the daughter, in weal or in woe  
The gay or the heart-sick may come.

My aim is to rear from the rocks that abound,  
A foundation in soft tones of grey.  
I'll hew the tall pines to enclose the low walls,  
A home where my children may stay.

Now what shall I call this sweet restful home—  
That is my dear Mother's good gift?  
The name of all others that comes to me first,  
My Mother's own name "Molly—Cliff".

We visited many places. We had a lovely ride over the Blue Ridge one pleasant hazy day to Sparta, Alleghany County. The vehicle was comfortable, and the horses spirited, and the beautiful views of valley and mountain and sky were pleasant to behold. The laurel and spruce, and other evergreens, and in the distance sheep and cattle grazing on the mountain side, and the little homes nestling near rocky streams or springs, are indeed a pleasant memory.

I want to tell you something of the life of my aunt Annie Norcott, of whom I was so forcefully reminded on one of my visits to the mountain country.

She was a very pretty brown-eyed girl—quite a belle with the boys and attracted the attention of William Bernard, whom she married and with whom she lived for many years in Greenville. She had six sons and one daughter. This girl was educated in Philadelphia, and wrote beautiful letters. Her son, Germaine Bernard, married Juliet Gilliam from Pilot Mountain, of whom I shall tell you presently. During the summer of 1918 I paid a short visit to two of my cousins, Mrs. Bernard's granddaughters, who lived at Pilot Mountain, Stokes County, North Carolina. I found them most intelligent and agreeable, and they told me many interesting incidents. You all know about your grandfather Norcott, and his early struggles, but nothing about his pretty sister, who married William Bernard. He was a good husband and took excellent care of his family. He was from Hyde County—and his father, Germaine Bernard settled there in a rather peculiar way. This Germaine Bernard was a young man from Bordeaux, France, and was coming to this country at the time Oglethorpe settled Georgia but when off the coast of North Carolina, near Hatteras, a violent storm came up, and the vessel was wrecked, and everything lost. Young Bernard was rescued with others, and found his way to Hyde County, where he married a Miss Fortisque. William was the only child of this couple. Mr. Germaine Bernard was highly educated. He could speak seven languages. He was thrown from his sulkey and killed while driving tandem. There was a small settlement in Hyde County named for him.

## LETTER XI

In February 1897 I had a great pleasure. Your father was holding court in Washington, N. C., and he took me with him to revisit the loved scenes of my early childhood. I went to the old home around which clusters so many fond recollections of my baby-hood. It presented a very dilapidated appearance. I could hardly believe it was the same place. There we took the carriage for Grimesland, a much more pleasant mode of conveyance to me than the automobile. One of the greatest pleasures of this drive was that it led by "Chatham", the colonial plantation of my great-great grandfather, Gen'l John Simpson, and the grave yard where he and his wife and many of his children's remains repose. It is on a hillock covered with grass and moss a century old. The white marble slabs shine faintly through the shadows of the old oak trees. Briars and tangled under brush covered the ground, grey moss hung in graceful festoons over this place of the dead, and I thought what a record of hopes and fears, dreary anticipations and pleasant reunions, this old grave on the hill-side covered, for it was in colonial times these things occurred.

Also on this road, near the Chatham farm is a historic house, which I went into, and was greatly interested in. Col. Simpson's son was cashier, and this was a bank belonging to the Crown. A tremendous brick fire-place covering almost the entire side of the house divided into two large chimneys halfway up. Inside were large closets in the brick wall, reaching down into the cellar. These were the receptacles for the valuable papers of the Crown and bank. This wonderful old house is now occupied by negroes and going to decay.

My sons were doing well, and my sons-in-law, so I really had not much to worry over.

There were so many of us, eight children, grand-children, your father and I. Death and disease stalked about the land, and the Death Angel visited everywhere, so my heart was raised in thankfulness that we were spared, and I prayed that this blessing of life, with grateful hearts, might be vouchsafed to us for many years to come.

In 1900 your father's health began to fail. He still kept on with his courts, but finally had to temporarily retire. We went to a great many doctors, and mineral springs, but without relief. On the advice of physicans we went to Bedford Springs in Pennsylvania, passing

through Baltimore, where I persuaded Judge W. S. Bryan to come and join us for a month, and spend his vacation there. I felt great responsibility with such a sick man so far from home, and was glad to persuade my brother-in-law, who was bright, encouraging company, to be with us. How strangely things happen in this world. To think of all the mineral springs in the country we should have been directed to this one, which held such dear memories for me. As I have told you before, my dear mother was advised by Dr. Johnson of Raleigh years before this time, to go to these springs, when I was only eleven years old. The journey through the valley of the Juniatta, is a fairy dream. It was there as a child I acquired my taste for maple sugar in the quaint little village of Bedford. This was in 1851. When my mother and I left there we went to Philadelphia where we met friends, and stopped at a grand hotel. Mrs. Reid, this friend, took me to walk with her one Sunday afternoon. We were on the opposite side of the street when a number of Sunday School scholars came out of a church. They began to look at me, and even pointed at me. I grew very self-conscious and confused, and asked Mrs. Reid what was the matter. I had been very carefully dressed, and my clothes were of rich material. We returned to the hotel much bewildered, but found out the trouble was I had on **pantalettes** (beautifully made with insertion, herring bone, and lace) but alas! they had just gone out of fashion, and I had not been in the city long enough to learn this.

Well your father and I made this journey to Bedford under different circumstances. As we could not find room at the hotel proper, we stopped at a lovely place called the "Armsdale". Here we had a nice visit. I met Mrs. Lyon from Baltimore, with whom I still correspond. Your uncle, Judge W. S. Bryan, did and said all kinds of funny things, which I enjoyed.

After our visit to Bedford we went to Buffalo Lithia and Cleveland, and returned home to find your father no better. After much consultation we decided he had better go to Johns Hopkins for an operation for gall stones. He was operated on, but improved slowly. I, of course, was with him, and it was a very trying experience. I learned much of hospital life and saw many sad cases, and much to draw upon one's sympathy.

We returned from Baltimore in February 1902. After a short rest your father resumed his official duties,







and he displayed a great bravery in going from court to court in his enfeebled condition. We got a good negro boy from Fayetteville to accompany him, and this boy was very attentive.

Finally he declined a re-election, and came home to spend the remainder of his days by his own quiet fire-side. He was very infirm, and one of us always accompanied him on his walks. He was paralyzed twenty-one months before he died. I had a rolling chair for him. He would roll up and down the broad piazza looking at the beautiful Neuse, dotted with the white sails of the boats, and greeting passers-by. He was very patient and gentle, and passed away the morning of the 14th of February 1919, falling asleep like a child. He was willing to go.

For forty years we had had no death in our family except that of a little delicate baby, whom we did not expect to rear. At the time of your father's passing away our best beloved and most beautiful grand-daughter, Mary Norcott London, was lying at the point of death from that awful disease, influenza, at her home in Charlotte. Her husband, Capt. Edwin T. Cansler, was in France with the army of occupation. He was not allowed to return to his home until his bride had left us forever. On the 18th of February 1919 God took her to Himself. She was twenty-four years old, and life had held nothing but love and happiness for her. Everything has changed for us since we see her no more. We try to be submissive, but we can never feel the same. May God help us.

“Beautiful toiler, thy work all done,  
Beautiful soul with glory gone,  
Beautiful Life, with its crown now won,  
God grant thee rest.”

“Beautiful spirit, free from all stain,  
Ours the heart-ache, the sorrow, the pain,  
Thine is the glory, the infinite gain,  
Thy slumber is sweet.”

And now I want to tell you of a happy birthday I have had, indeed the happiest of all my eighty years.

I have had my old enemy the grippe again this winter, and it has left my heart weak, so I do not know how many years I may count on in this beautiful world I love so much.

On this birthday I had four of my precious children

with me, and four away. Telegrams began to arrive before breakfast, and letters. Such bright, pleasant letters, and kind messages. Then came flowers! By eleven o'clock the house was a bower, and so many lovely presents. And I had not said a word about this birthday. Scores of friends called during the day to wish me "Many happy returns". At night we had a family dinner party consisting of twenty. Everyone was so kind and nice. I am a most fortunate old woman, and I thank God for all the love that has been lavished on me all these years, and a million times for these children. grand children and great-grand children. These last have made me young again with them and been the delight and joy of my old age. I have had a very comfortable life, sunshine, and some shadow, more health than sickness, more kindness than enmity, and the pleasure of reading so many charming books. My eyes have served me to good purpose. I am deaf, but very little, and I take pleasure in everything going on.

"To the life we are clinging, they also would cling,  
But it speeds for us all like a bird on the wing"

"So the multitude goes like the flower or weed,  
That withers away to let others succeed,  
So the multitude comes, even these we behold,  
To repeat the same tale that has often been told".

## LETTER XII

These letters are taken from one hundred and fifty written during the four years I was at school in Richmond, Va., and Washington City, in 1854 and '58. My mother had married a second time, and was living on a beautiful plantation called "Monticello," ten miles from Kinston. The house was situated in a large grove; two huge live oaks guarded the entrance at each side of the gate; and a flower garden surrounded the house; two vegetable gardens were at the back, and a well of delicious water stood temptingly near; so many servants about the house they were in each others way, and a little maid stood at the back of her chair to pick up the knitting ball when it was dropped. The horses and carriage were brought to the door every afternoon for a drive. Although the surroundings were so pleasant, it was often quite lonesome, and company was given a cordial welcome. I remember there was once a "Primitive Association" held in the neighborhood, and we entertained a number of the delegates. The good old preacher was asked to pray, and he put up a fervent

petition for the "King of the House, and the Queen of the Range." He had never been so far from home before (thirty miles), but he was told he would "Meet with kindness and sure enough he had."

Sweet Spring, Va., Aug. 1st, 1854.

My Darling Mary,

I wrote you from Petersburg, Friday, which I hope reached you Saturday evening, and I trust found you well and cheerful. The next morning we took the cars of the South Side Railroad to Lynchburg, however, the last eleven miles of the road is not completed, and we had to take the stage to L., thence by Tennessee railroad to Salem, sixty miles from the White Sulphur. As we arrived at the terminus of the road Saturday evening, we passed the Sabbath at Salem, and yesterday morning at four o'clock took our seats in the stage, only ten passengers, eight inside, two on top. We anticipated an uncomfortable day, and were not disappointed. The road took us nearly all the way over a succession of lofty mountains; there seemed to be no way to get around them, consequently they had to be crossed. Our nerves were frequently tried at the dangerous precipices which yawned so fearfully on the mountain side, yet that same unseen hand which has preserved us all our life long brought us safety through, and we could not but feel grateful, not only for protection, but also that we had been permitted to enjoy the view of these magnificent mountains. Must say the views we had yesterday for grandeur exceed anything I have seen. On our way here we learned that there was such a crowd of visitors at White Sulphur that there was no chance of getting rooms, and feeling greatly the need of rest we have stopped here for a day or two, and have sent to engage rooms. We are only seventeen miles from the W. S. This is a lovely spot, and very much improved since I saw it, just seventeen years since. How time flies! I cannot realize that the 16th of this month I shall be forty-two, that is if spared to see it. Yet so it is, and we should wisely improve the precious moments as they pass. I feel much pain at our separation my dear child, yet conscience and judgment both tell me that I have done right, and I hope you think with me and will try to be happy and satisfied, and improve finely in all your studies. I feel very anxious to hear from you, and have sent over to the White Sulphur for letters; don't fail to write twice a week. Your aunt Mary is somewhat unwell with cold; she will soon be relieved now she can be

quiet. Mr. C. and uncle are quite well. I am mending slowly. I am too much fatigued to write you a long letter, but will do so very soon. Tell your cousin to write. You must both be prudent about eating fruit. If you have any news from cousin Ann Howard let me know. I am very fearful we shall never see her again, and how it grieves me to think of her and her children. Oh, how much they will love if their mother is taken from them! But God knows best, we must leave these solemn things in his hands. We all join in love to you and Mary. Her father says she must improve rapidly in her studies.

Goodbye darling. May kind angels guard you.

Your loving Mother.

White Sulphur Springs, Va., Aug. 5, 1854.

My dearest Mary:

We rested two days at the Sweet Springs, and then came on to this place the next morning; had the pleasure of receiving your of July 28th. I was delighted to hear from my precious child, and especially relieved in mind to hear you were tolerably well satisfied and getting interested in your studies; hope your next letter, which I am looking for daily, will inform me that you are still more contented and getting on finely. Your uncle received your cousin's letter at the same time I did yours; he will write soon. Wednesday night when we came over here there was so much difficulty in getting cabins at this place we stopped about one mile distant, and have but just obtained rooms and come down. The first thing after getting the baggage arranged is to write to you. This place is somewhat improved since we were here nine years ago, and there is a great crowd of people here—at least six hundred and fifty. About the middle of this month the visitors will begin to lessen, and will continue to do so until all leave. The water thus far seems to agree with me very well, and I hope for great relief from taking it. Your aunt has continued to suffer with cold ever since she left, and is quite indisposed from it. She begins to think it would have been better to remain in Wake; I hope, however, she will receive much benefit before going home. Of course, I have not had an opportunity of visiting your dear father's grave, but Mr. C. and Uncle have visited the sacred spot, and say it is in nice order, and the tombstone the best in the graveyard. Ah, my dear Mary, my mind goes back with so much vividness to the sad, heart-stricken time I had here nine years since, and, in imagination, I can see the solemn funeral procession

followed by only two mourners, one of them a little girl of only four years, who little knew the greatness of the loss she had sustained, and who, young as she was, tried so earnestly to win her mother from her grief.

These things, darling child, your mother cannot forget, and too, ever since you have lain in my bosom, the strongest tie to life, and my dear, my love knows no change, yet I do believe it is really necessary you should learn to depend on yourself, which you would not learn if constantly with me. So, you see, duty requires us to do many things which are not agreeable. I wrote you last Tuesday from the Sweet Springs, this is Saturday evening—two letters this week—have you done as well? Your letter was five days getting here; hope mine are not so long reaching you. Now, my child, I must urge you to be prudent in every respect, and when you write tell me all about yourself as to health, studies and everything I should know. While undergoing so much fatigue to get here, I could but feel glad that you were in a place of comfort quietly pursuing your studies. How much I would prefer home to this summer travel! Your uncle, aunt, and Mr. C. all join in love to you, and Mary. Let me remind you that both should not write by the same mail, then we should hear from you oftener. The Lord bless and preserve my child from all evil is the prayer of  
Your affectionate Mother.

Monticello, N. C., March 11th, 1855.

My dear Mary,

You are permitted to see another birthday, and my heart is filled with deep gratitude to God for having spared you and granted the many blessings which have crowded your life. Fourteen years have swiftly glided by; the period usually allotted to childhood has passed, and you are now entering the most important period of life, for on the manner in which you improve the next seven years depends, in a great measure, your well doing in time and destiny in eternity. You have hitherto been almost constantly by my side; as yet you have known but little of the responsibility of relying on your own discretion and exertion. The time has now come for us to separate, and for you to prove that the lessons so constantly given have been treasured, and that you have fixed principles of right to guide you safely through the many temptations and difficulties which may assail you. I do not think, my dear daughter, that I need urge you to be diligent in the

acquisition of learning; the pleasure it affords us, to you, a sufficient inducement. I would, however, caution you against indulgence of novel reading. Now is the time to store the treasure house of your mind with useful knowledge, which will stand you in good stead in the years to come, I desire at this time my precious child, to call your attention to the importance of improving your temper and manners. Now is the time to bend your every effort to acquire an amiable disposition, and that sweet, gentle dignity of manner which is so necessary to make up the character of a refined and polished lady, and which also adds so much to the happiness of the social circle. The task, which I so earnestly desire you to undertake, will not be the work of a day or month; you will, perhaps, feel that it is difficult, nevertheless persevere and I trust and believe success will crown your efforts. I must, however, here remind you that in our weakness and inability to overcome the imperfections of our nature, and to strive after a high standard of moral excellence, there is a source higher than earth to which we are privileged to apply for wisdom and grace to that blessed fountain opened in the house of David for sin and uncleanness. I would point and urge you to ask wisdom of God, who giveth liberally and upbraideth not. May you find that the blood of Christ cleanseth all from sin, and may His grace enable you to use the blessings bestowed "as a wise servant who has to give account of the talents committed to his care." To you, just beginning life, the future seems beautifully tinted with the rainbow hues of hope, the future looks bright and fair. I would not cast a cloud on your pleasing anticipations, but would remind you that all things bright must fade; that this earth is not our abiding place. Already many of our loved and cherished ones have been called to the spirit land, and we must soon follow? How important then to have the affections placed on things above, and to be able to say—

Whate'er thou deniest O give me thy grace  
The spirits sure witness and smiles of thy face,  
Indulge me with patience to wait at thy throne  
And find even here a sweet foretaste of home."

My prayer for you is "Lead her not into temptation, but deliver her from evil," May you my precious child, be spared to see many returns of this day, and each one find you advancing in wisdom and holiness.

Your affectionate Mother.

Monticello, N. C., January 29th, 1858.

My darling child:

When the boy returned from the office Monday, I was most agreeably surprised to receive yours of the twenty-second instant. I had been feeling very anxious about you all day, and it was such a relief to hear my precious Mary had passed a happy week, and was, as I inferred, in good health. I wrote last Monday and enclosed a draft to Mrs. Kingsford. I hope it reached you safely. It will soon be time to pay for the second half of the session, which Mr. C. will have it in his power to attend to in good time as he has just sent his cotton to New Berne to be shipped to New York. Just think! one-twelfth of the New Year is nearly gone; time does, indeed, pass rapidly away, and how careful we should be to improve it as it flies! Let the duties of the day be done in the day, then work will be pleasant and you will not be over-tasked. Time with you is very important, and you must not let your disposition for fun and amusement draw you off from your studies; at the same time I don't wish my darling to lose her cheerful disposition and joyous laugh. I am very glad Mrs. Kingsford is so kind as to take you to places calculated to interest and improve you. You should try to profit by all your opportunities, and fit yourself to be an ornament and a blessing in the circle in which you move. Even now, you should try to do good by setting a good example to your associates. Some of them I am sure have not had the careful training you have had, and a word in season might do them much good. There is your friend, Miss Fox, who has no mother; she has some good traits of character; persuade her to try to overcome those little pets of temper, and she will be so much happier. The Good Book says "Greater is he that keepeth his temper than he that taketh a city". Above all persuade her to ask God in humble prayer to give her strength to do right; and may I not hope that my precious Mary seeks earnestly for grace and wisdom from the same source? Have you, dearest, ever thought how many prayers your mother humbly presents to God for your conversion, and for every other needed blessing, in the course of one year at only three a day? And they are much more than that, but at that estimate there are more than a thousand. Recollect this when you are silencing the voice of conscience and putting off repentance to a more convenient season. Now is the accepted time. I pray you, then, delay not to seek an interest in the atoning blood of our blessed Savior. I am pleased to

hear that Meta J. wrote you. It does indeed seem a pity she did not receive your letter in time to go to Washington City. I have no doubt she is a very nice girl, and should be happy to see her at our house. And Miss Monroe is not married; she is, no doubt, right in putting off that important step to a more distant day. Mrs. Ivy from New Berne and Mrs. Chappell from Kinston spent two days with us this week. Mrs. C. has a lovely babe six months old. Your cousin and Alice are both looking well, and are cheerful. Of course they have a good deal to say about beaux, but it does not amount to much. It is a settled fact that our anticipations are seldom realized, and it would be well if we could refrain from building too many air-castles, which so soon vanish at the realities of life. To the well-regulated mind there is always enough to interest for they do not live on continual excitement, expecting something remarkable to occur to make them conspicuous and envied above others. They accept with gratitude the gifts of God, and enjoy all as coming from a father's hand. Mr. C's. health is better this week. I am thinking of going to New Berne tomorrow, but I have a headache today and may put it off until Monday. Your Aunt Sue does not improve; I fear she will always be an invalid. I shall take Annie with me to see her mother, and probably bring her back again. She is improving in looks as she grows older, but is not nearly so pretty as Mary; she promises to be a rare beauty. Little Sue is a darling too; she looks very sweet toddling over the floor. Your uncle is very much opposed to your quitting school next summer. He says you have the talents, the means and the youth, and should not think of leaving school until you are eighteen. Can you hold out that long? If you can, I don't know how I could bear it, but we will try to decide right. My going to Washington this winter is doubtful. Mrs. Parmerle and Mrs. Bernard are coming to see me quite soon. You have not told me how you like the bonnets or veil. Do you walk every day when the weather will allow, and do you wear your thick shoes? Your letters do me so much good; how I long to see you to imprint some loving kisses on your dear cheek, but I must wait. William had a letter from Mary Jabe last week, all were very well. Tell me how your health is, and if you weigh as much as when you left home.

Goodbye, may God bless you.

Your affectionate Mother.



Monticello, N. C. March 6, 1858.

My dearest Mary:

Your dear letter of the twenty-fifth ultimo was received Wednesday while I was suffering with a most distressing sick headache. I sat up in bed and read it, and felt that it was, indeed, a sweet little messenger of peace and love. Yes, darling, the sentiments expressed are such as I approve, and now that you have arrived at an age capable of choosing what is noble and elevating, it is cause of great gratification that your mind is satisfied only with goodness, purity and truth. I was pleased to hear you enjoyed the levee. It must, indeed, have been a rare treat to you who enjoy novelty with so much zest. But don't let the President's compliments increase your vanity, for you must recollect he is a bachelor, and, of course, must be complimentary to the ladies. Certainly, you had a great deal of social enjoyment for one week, especially if you finished with the visit to Mrs. Clark. If you went, I hope you had an enjoyable time, and not too many fascinating beaux about. I am often anxious about your health, fearing your buoyant disposition will be the cause of imprudence. I felt quite relieved to find the levee was over without causing you a severe cold. Last Monday morning I wrote you hurriedly, thinking I would write more at length in a day of two, but the week has proved one of unusual occupation; so much so, that now, Saturday night, I have just found time to write. Monday morning Mrs. Mitchell, and Miss Seeley left. Their company was very agreeable, but my mind was so divided between my desire to attend to my guests, and, at the same time, not to neglect Mr. C. that I necessarily felt somewhat relieved when they left. The next day I received very polite letters from both ladies. Miss S. expressed herself highly pleased with her visit, and hopes I may soon visit the north and afford her an opportunity of reciprocating my kindness. She is really a nice, intelligent woman, Mr. C. has been in bed all the week; he sat up a good deal Wednesday, and aided in nursing my head while I was suffering so. Fortunately I was able to be up next day, as usual, and give him all the attention he required—I may say requires, for he is still in bed, and worse last night than he has been. Dr. Woodley has been out today, and says his is a case of chronic liver disease, not very dangerous, but I expect will require a long course of treatment to effect a cure. Mr. C. is very thin, and looks very badly at times, but he is not desponding. It grives me to see him suffer, but I hope he will be spared some

years longer to be a stay and a comfort to us all. Lizzie and her dear little boys stayed a week and left yesterday morning. You can imagine how difficult it was to keep those lively boys from making a noise to disturb Mr. C. At times they would break through and give us an idea of what they could do if restraint were removed. Just before dinner yesterday Alice Hilliard and Mary Simpson came up to meet Rebecca Powell, who is going down to your uncle's to go to school to Miss. Rebecca Owen. By brother's request William went to Goldsboro and brought Miss Powell down; the young ladies speak of returning tomorrow, but it is now snowing, and the chances are in favor of my keeping them, I feel very anxious to have time to write you a birthday letter, but fear it will be rather too late; however, a day or two after will make no great difference. I have been thinking of it every day, but with a house full of company, myself somewhat indisposed, and Mr. C. sick it seemed impossible to command the time.

I hope darling you will have health, and every other needed blessing. Remember me particularly on the eleventh. My prayers and feelings will be with you, and I trust you will make some good resolves for the future.

God bless you, my child,

Your loving Mother.

New Berne, N. C., April 21, 1859.

My precious child.

The stage was so late getting in Tuesday night I did not get your letter until yesterday morning, which seemed a long time to wait for it. I am very sorry to hear you have been sick; what was the matter? I hope you will be prudent for health should be highly prized. I am troubled about your going to Greenville, and now say most emphatically that I do not wish you to go with Mr. Latham or anyone else, unless it is an old friend, or one of your cousins could come down to go and return with you. My darling daughter is of too much importance to be travelling about under the escort of anyone she can pick up. If you can't go under proper protection, put off the visit to another time. If I were able I would come over and go with you, but I have a fever every day with distressing headache. I have to stay in bed several hours in the middle of the day and merely keep up the balance of the time; of course I am tied at home. Your absence begins to seem very long to me. I can't say I am willing

for you to stay until the middle of May, but give me reasons for wishing to stay, and say how you will arrange about Mr. Bryan's visit. Another thing—will you be treating Sarah Outlaw right to stay so long? You will have to come home in the stage and I ought to send someone to come home with you. I don't like you to have no protection but a stage driver. Let me know how you can arrange these matters for they cause me a good deal of anxiety; perhaps Willie Grist would come; if so, you should pay his way. I hope you enjoyed your letters; I will forward any others that may come. I sent one to Sarah Outlaw from C. Hill by yesterday's mail. Mr. B. is certainly a faithful correspondent. I regret to hear M. is so easily pleased, as I am anxious she should make a good match. I know you are all having a nice time, but should think you could be ready to come home by the last of the month and give the "picnic" up. Dr. Duffy is better, though still in bed. Your Aunt Lizzie is sick now, but I hope she will not be very sick. Sue is here today and while I was up stairs lying down she cut up a supply of postage stamps I had just bought; she left only two. She sends you a kiss. Mr. Cuthbert's handsome goods have not arrived, and I have not been able to go to the stores to select any dresses for you and Mary S. I will try and get out in a day or two. Have you seen Sister Fullerton yet? Do go to see her as often as you can. I feel very grateful to Mrs. Permerle and other friends for their kindness to you. Kiss Mrs. P. for me. I hope Mr. P. has returned safely, and that you will have the pleasure of seeing him. I don't think it will do any good to advise M. a great deal. I wish, however, she would not have any more trifling love affairs for they are much to be regretted. My darling, I am lonely without you; the house at times looks dreary and almost desolate. Then, at night I want you in my arms, and have your sweet goodnight kiss. I hope the stage will be in time to let me have your letter tonight. I would like to see it before I close this, but then it would be too late to get mine in. Write every mail without fail. May our heavenly Father preserve you from all evil and return you safely to your fond

Mother.

## HENRY RAVENSCROFT BRYAN

New Berne, North Carolina,

January 31st, 1912.

*Heritage* I, Henry Ravenscroft Bryan, sixth son of John Heritage Bryan, and Mary Williams Bryan, his wife, was born in New Berne on the 8th day of March, 1836. I was born in the brick house on Pollock Street in which my Father and Grandfather (James Bryan) lived, situated on the south side of the street, between Metcalf and George. My parents were natives of New Berne, and were married there on the 20th of Dec. 1821 by the Rev. Richard S. Mason of the Episcopal Church.

The name of my Mother's father was William Shepard, son of Jacob Shepard. William Shepard died in 1819. He was a native of Carteret Co., North Carolina. His wife's maiden name was Mary Blount, daughter of Frederick Blount, and a native of Pasquotank Co., N. C., and lived on the Elm or Elmwood Plantation in said county. My mother was named for her maternal grandmother, Mary Williams, who married Frederick Blount (son of John Blount) April 5th, 1769. He was a polished gentleman of wealth, a planter lawyer, and intimate friend of the Colonial Governor Tryon. Mary Blount, my grandmother, was born in 1772, and was buried in the old cemetery in Raleigh on the 16th day of October 1864. She died on the 12th of October in her 93rd year. Mary Blount, daughter of Frederick Blount married William Shepard on the 12th of May 1794. William Shepard was an uncle of the Biddles of Philadelphia—Nicholas and others.

My maternal Grandfather, William Shepard ~~shepard~~<sup>ard</sup> was a man of business, and large property. He was principal owner of the famous privateer "Snap Dragon," commanded by Otway Burns in the War of 1812. This vessel was quite successful in capturing prizes of war. Shepard owned a steam sawmill, located near New Berne on Lawson's Creek, and much real estate in and around New Berne. He lived in a large brick house at the corner of South Front and Middle Streets, and owned property on the west side of Middle Street down to the channel of Trent river.

My paternal Grandfather, James Bryan, was native of Craven Co., and was engaged in merchandise in New Bern. He owned vessels that ran to the West Indies and Northern Points. His store was on Pollock St. opposite

the eastern corner of the Episcopal church yard. He died in January 1806, and he and William Shepard are both buried in Cedar Grove Cemetery in New Berne. My paternal grandmother was Rachael Heritage, daughter of Capt. John Heritage of the Continental line. Her family owned a plantation in Lenoir Co., named "Harrow" from Harrow in England. Upon the death of her first husband, James Bryan, who died leaving three children, towit: John Heritage, Elizabeth and James West, she married Dr. Fred Blount, by whom she had several children, Frederick, Alexander, Mary, Caroline, and Heritage. Some of these Blounts moved to Florida. She died in New Berne in 1840.

My mother, Mary W. Bryan, was born in New Berne Jan. 2nd 1801. She was a woman of very strong character had a good education, and handsome black eyes. She was a good disciplinarian. She and my father were the parents of fourteen children. The youngest, Frederick, died at seventeen. Thirteen grew up to maturity. They were attendants upon the Episcopal Church and well instructed in its doctrines. My father and mother were much given to hospitality, and lived in much comfort with plenty of servants—their slaves.

My father, John Heritage Bryan, was born in New Berne, November 4th, 1798, grandson of Col. John Bryan, an officer in the Revolution and member of the Provincial congress at Halifax. His ancestry on both sides were prominent in the life of the colony from its first settlement. He was elected to the state senate in 1823, and served two terms. In 1825 while travelling in the Northern States for his health, he was, unknown to himself, elected to the State Senate and Congress on the same day, defeating Richard Dobbs Speight for Congress. He was the youngest member of Congress. He served two terms and declined a re-election, desiring to devote his whole time to his law practise, and to his growing family. (See his address to his constituents in 1829.) Soon thereafter he declined an election to Superior Court Bench. In 1830 he delivered the commencement address at the University. In 1838, in February, he moved to Raleigh. He purchased a house and lot from George E. Badger in the Northern part of the city, the adjoining square being now occupied by the Governor's mansion. He was a man of great personal popularity, always courteous, polite, dignified, strictly honest and truthful. It was said of him in the obituary which was written by his friend Geo.

Note: Heritage - (2rs)

William Heritage - See Colonial Records etc

W. Mordecai, "No man ever doubted his word." His appearance was fine and striking. He died in Raleigh, N. C. on the 10th day of May 1870.

My mother, Mary W. Bryan, died in Raleigh, July 13th, 1881. They lived together happily, for nearly fifty years.

At the age of six I started school in Raleigh, and after several years entered the "Raleigh Classical Mathematical and Military Academy" kept by Jefferson M. Lovejoy. The latter part of May 1852 several other pupils of Lovejoy's and myself left Raleigh in private conveyance for Chapel Hill to be examined for college. In June I went back and became a member of the Freshman Class, consisting of fifty-seven members I graduated with first and second distinction, and delivered the Latin Salutatory, a first honor speech at the commencement. I graduated in June 1856. There was a class of fifty members. After graduation I commenced the study of law with my father in Raleigh. In June 1857 I obtained a license from the Supreme Court to practise in the county courts. After receiving my license to practice law I went abroad for about four months. We were ten days in crossing. I returned home in September 1858, and secured an office in Raleigh opposite the present post office.

On the 24th day of November 1859 I was married to Miss Mary Biddle Norcott. We were married in the brick house in New Berne known as the "Jarvis House," on the south-east corner of East Front and Johnston Streets. Rev. Thos. E. Skinner of Raleigh officiated.

After marriage we took a bridal trip south. We returned to New Berne and have resided here ever since. I rented an office in about a year and entered upon the practice of law. In the fall of 1860 I purchased from James and T. W. Miller, two Northern men, the old "Speight" plantation and the "Jim Stanly" land adjoining. The land runs from Trent River to Neuse, containing according to the deed 1801 acres. We are still owners except a few acres that have been sold off.

We were forced to "refugee" up country during the war between the States, and while there two of our children were born. After the close of the war we went back to New Berne with very little to live on. I managed to secure some rent from the plantation the year the war ended. I got about twenty-seven bales of cotton, some of which I sold for 52½ cents a pound. I opened a law

office in New Berne. With this and rents from the plantation we managed to "make buckle and tongue" meet. We lived in rented houses for several years, and on March 29th, 1870 we moved into our home on the Neuse, where we have lived ever since.

We have had eleven children born to us, a list of which I give as follows:

John Norcott, born October 3rd, 1860 in Greensboro, N.C. died very young.

Sarah Frances, born at "Company Shops," N. C., March 29th, 1862. (Married John B. Broadfott of Fayetteville, N. C., Oct. 15th, 1885.) *Died*

Frederick Charles born in Raleigh, N. C., May 3rd, 1864. (Married Letitia Allis Williams of Syracuse, New York, on September 28th, 1907.) *Died March 7,*

Mary Norcott Born in New Berne, January 20th, 1867. (Married H. A. London, Jr. Pittsboro, N. C., on June 21st, 1893.) *Died April 12, 1932 -*

Henry Ravenscroft, Born in New Berne, January 1st, 1870. (Married Willie Law, of Raleigh, June 23rd, 1909.) - *Dr*

Shepard, born in New Berne, December 8th, 1871, *Feb.* (Married Florence King Jackson of Atlanta, Ga., Jan. 14th, 1909.)

Isabel, born in New Berne, April 5th, 1873. Died in infancy.

Kate, born in New Berne, May 2nd, 1874. (Married Frank S. Duffy of New Berne, April 5th, 1899.) *Died Dec. 8, 1945 -*

Margaret Shepard, born in New Berne, December 1st, 1875.

Edwin Speight born in New Berne, March 19th, 1877. Died in infancy.

Isabel Constance born May 10th, 1879 in New Berne, (Married Edwin H. Jordan, Loudon County, Virginia, November 16th, 1905.)

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Three children have died in infancy, eight now remain and are a great comfort in the declining years of their parents.

The shadows are getting very low, particularly for me. The days of the years of my pilgrimage are seventy and six years. My wife's age is seventy-one. She was born on the 11th day of March 1841.

*Mary Norcott Wynn, died*

I have filled a few offices during my uneventful life. I have been Justice of the Peace, attorney for A. & N. C. Railway, and for the Board of County Commissioners, and also for the City of New Berne, and Mayor of said city, Presidential Elector and in the Electoral College voted for General Winfield S. Hancock. I have been judge of the Superior Court of North Carolina. I was on the bench for sixteen years (two terms) and at the age of seventy-one years retired, my term having expired. I have been all over the state, and held court in every county several times. I served the state during my term to the best of my ability, and endeavored to administer justice without fear, favor, or affection.

I have never in that high and responsible office done other than my duty as I understood it. My career is now nearly closed, and I will soon be gathered unto my fathers, and required to give an account of the deeds done in the body.

















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